

early years of the Annual Timp Hike one of the normal ways to reach the mountain was via the train from Provo. People also used the train to reach the Bridal Veil Falls and Vivian Park area.

However, throughout the years, the building of more and better highways, the advancements in truck transportation and the convenience of automobile travel cut into the railway's business. In the 20 to 30 years before it was sold by the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, traffic slowed to a trickle and was all but nonexistent.

In 1969, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company sold the railway, which included both the tracks and right-of-way, to the Utah Department of Transportation(UDOT). According to Lowe Ashton, the present owner of the Heber Creeper line, UDOT didn't really want the railway or tracks, but the right-of-way instead. This right-of-way included much more land than did the present highway through Provo Canyon. They apparently had some big plans for the route through the canyon which included putting most of the length of Provo River in a pipeline, and constructing a completely new 4-lane freeway-type highway in addition to the present road. This was the beginning of the uproar over UDOT's Provo Canyon Highway plan.

The next thing to happen was that two committees were formed, one from Utah County, the other from Wasatch County, which were in opposition to UDOT's plan. Out of this came one committee which wanted to save the canyon and begin a scenic steam engine railway instead. This Railway Committee went to the Utah State Legislature urging them to put a halt to UDOT's plan and for help with a plan to form a scenic railway with the old Heber Creeper tracks.

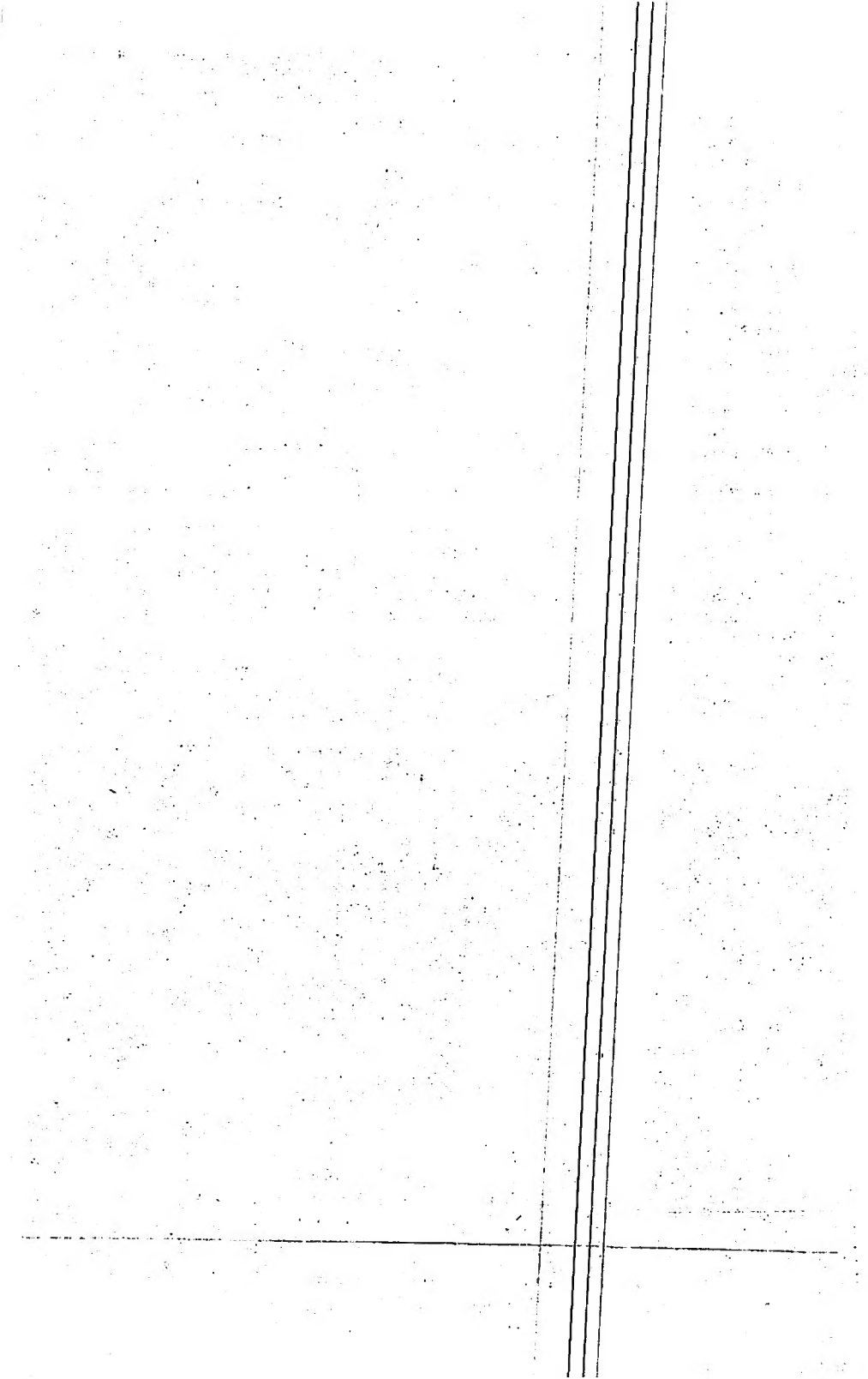
The state legislature apparently overruled UDOT on the matter. As it turned out, the freeway plans for Provo Canyon were scuttled and Utah Parks and Recreation was given the rights to the old Heber Creeper line from Bridal Veil Falls to the depot in Heber. This was the beginning of the present-day Heber Creeper.

One member of the Railroad Committee was Heber business man and owner of Ashton Lumber Company, Lowe Ashton. He became one of the point men for the project because during the 1969 sale of the D & RGW right-of-way, he bought the railway station site. With the train station in private hands, the Wasatch Mountain Scenic Railway Company was started. The steam powered train made its first run in July of 1970 and has been operating ever since. In 1972, the company adopted the name Heber Creeper as its official patented logo.

For various reasons, in 1980 the Wasatch Mtn. Scenic Railway Co. was taken over by a non-profit organization by the name of Timpanogos Preservation Society. While the TPS was running the Heber Creeper, it obtained a number of historic structures from the Sons of the Utah Pioneers which were previously located in Corinne, Utah, along with some rolling stock and locomotives. They also



The Heber Creeper chugging toward Mt. Timpanogos in the background.



received an economic development grant for the railroad's development. During this period of time the ridership slacked off and the society went into receivership in 1983, because they did not meet the requirements of being a non-profit operation.

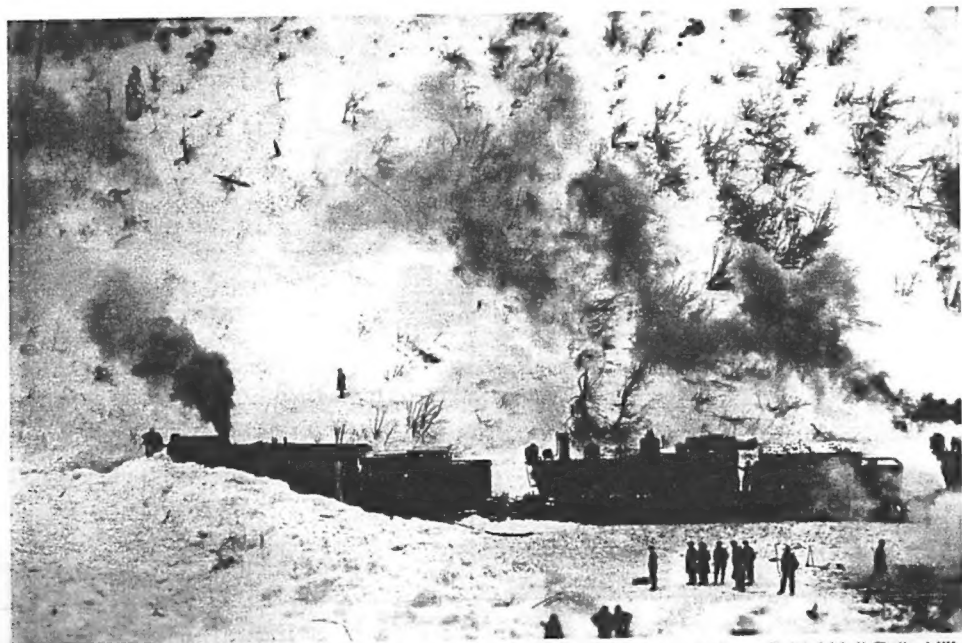
When this happened, Ashton again gained control and was given a two year lease. In July of 1983, the name of the company was changed to the Deer Creek Scenic Railroad. In 1984, the Timpanogos Preservation Society filed for bankruptcy. Today the company or rather small corporation, which is called the New London Railroad and Village, is still running the Heber Creeper and doing rather well.

From 1970 until about 1983, the train ran in the summer months only, and to as far as Bridal Veil Falls. In 1983, high water and spring flooding of the Provo River caused some damage to the line between Vivian Park and Bridal Veil Falls, so after that time the train went only to as far as Vivian Park. In 1986-87, the steam-driven train began year-round service for the first time. Recently the Heber Creeper has begun a *ride and dine service* in cooperation with the Homestead Resort of Midway.

Here is an approximate train schedule. The summer schedule usually begins the week of Memorial Day at the end of May with trains running daily to Vivian Park(half way through Provo Canyon), until about the first week of October. During the summer season there are two runs a day, each lasting about 3 1/2 hours, round-trip.

October is a slack month, so they shut down the line for repairs and maintenance service, then re-open it in November making only one run a day and only to the Deer Creek Reservoir Dam and back. The winter schedule continues until about May 1. They then shut it down again for repairs and maintenance. May is another slow month, because there is no skiing at Park City and many of the winter-time riders are skiers. About half the riders are out of staters, and many come by way of Park City. The above schedule will change for sure, so it's best to call 654-2900 in Heber, 531-6022 in Salt Lake, or 649-9521 in Park City, before you make the drive to the Heber Valley.

When you get to Heber, drive to the center of town and turn west at the sign stating, *Wasatch Mtn. Visitor Center and Historic Steam Train*, which is at the only signal light in town on 100 South. Head due west about one km until you cross the only set of tracks. On your right will be the station, several old locomotives on display, and a small western style town with a number of small shops selling tourist items and food.



This 1924 foto shows the giant snowslide which roared down the mountain at Bridal Veil Falls killing two workmen(Mr. Robert Curtis foto).

